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ABSTRACT

The conception of English as something socially learned and of central importance to the development of the individual has obvious implications for the teacher who hopes to develop in his pupils good speaking, writing, listening, and reading. The teacher must cooperate with the child's growth by providing a climate for maturation, an enriching of the child's environment by exposing him to new and wide-ranging experiences, both actual and literary at the primary levels, and principally through literature at the more advanced levels. A consideration of the teaching of English in each of its three aspects--speaking, writing, and reading--completes the first paper. The topics of the remaining five papers are the teaching of English and the general development of children, the aims of teaching English, language and environment considered in relation to knowledge and proficiency, literature and values, and school facilities for the teaching of English. (TO)

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WORKING PARTY PAPER NO. 4

Knowledge and Proficiency in English

by

Denys Thompson

If the readers and writer of this paper took stock of what knowledge and proficiency they attained at school and university and considered how much of their attainment has remained actively with them, what would be the result? Very little, one suspects. It would probably be a humbling exercise for us as teachers. If again we call to mind the best of our pupils, whether in native endowment, university studies, or subsequent career, how much of their distinction can be attributed to what they learned from our formal teaching of skills or our inculcation of content? The benefits we have derived ourselves and imparted to others are more likely to have been interests and attitudes. It is education rather than instruction from which we and our pupils have profited.

Neither in the States nor in Britain has the curriculum in English been thought out on first principles. Instead, it is often a hotch-potch, the product of historical accidents and social pressures. As the authors of Freedom and Discipline in English observe, "The English curriculum in the average secondary school today is an unhappy combination of old matter unrenewed and new matter that rarely rises above the level of passing concerns." In England the pressure has been exerted

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through mass examining, especially the Language Paper taken at sixteen by a large number of pupils because society demands an order of merit in English performance; a pass is essential for most careers. The repercussions on the teaching of English have been wholly bad. A means of testing has become a method of teaching; the candidate is expected to produce facts and standardised opinions and to be facile in certain mechanical skills. "The examinations . . . are not . . . a test of candidates' power to express themselves . . . the drilling of a class in stereotyped questions based on past examination papers and luck . . . play a large part." And, "The skills required . . . are of no real value to them in their writing" (The Examining of English Language). Any qualities, such as imagination and a sensitive response to life and literature, that are valued by good teachers are at a discount in the examination room. Nor will the good teacher find that in preparing pupils for examination he can be guided by "that unified conception of English which increasingly underlies all our best teaching" (Frank Whitehead, op. cit., p. 238). The approach determined by examinations divides English into compartments and sets out to test some of them. One such compartment contained grammatical minutiae--"linguistic parlour tricks"--that are condemned by The Examining of English Language as irrelevant and harmful. "No examination is serving a useful purpose if it encourages pupils to adopt a form of examination room English instead of seeking to express appropriately what they have to say." Another dead end reached by the examination approach is the notion that there is only one kind of English to be read in one

way--"informative" writing, to which other kinds are inferior.

The situation is aggravated and hardened by the use of past examination papers for teaching purposes and by text-books that offer practice in such skills and such approaches to reading matter as can be tested by a mass examination. These exert an extremely powerful influence in determining the English curriculum of many schools, and they kill much of the joy tnat can be had in learning and teaching. For many teachers they establish the nature of English and the method of teaching it:

> Examination produce a new sense of what English is. Their power, their concern for the markable is a chief reason for the continuance of that other version of "English" whose constituent parts are grammar, precis, spelling, comprehension, exercises, etc. It soon builds up into a self-sufficient subject with its own mechanical drive--its own techniques, texts, attendants, and its own minds, endorsed by and endorsing it. (Brian Jackson, English versus Examinations)

The influence of examinations conditions our thoughts about teaching English as well as our practice. We are all of us products of the examination system; it affects us so deeply that we need to examine our assumptions afresh and carefully. How far American thinking is comparably conditioned we in England do not know. But Freedom and Discipline in English suggests that there may be a parallel in the States: "English teaching today is less noticeably affected by remote curriculum makers than by text-books chosen or assigned for classroom use. The evidence of syllabuses makes clear that far too many teachers are letting text-books do their curriculum thinking for them" (And cf. The Teaching of Literature, p. 7, final paragraph).

English has no content; there are virtually no facts to transmit. But for examination purposes a false content has been invented, as we have just noted. One gathers from a study of text-books that English in America has not lacked an invented content, established to meet social or vocational needs (cf. Joseph Mersand, Attitudes towards English Teaching), or maintained by tradition--"She were an old battle-axe but she really learned us our grammar." Two other impressions are left with the superficial observer: first, that there is a good deal of pressure on schools, through text-books and other means, to accept various kinds of grammar or linguistics that are ably disseminated by research workers in the field, whether or not the new material is of educational value at school level. Publishers seem to have considerable power here. Second, the example of the sciences has been inappropriately invoked in order to provide English with a content and "discipline," and a body of information has been thought up. Whatever their nature, the external pressures upon English in both the States and in Britain appear to have produced similar effects: a distortion of the curriculum, a pseudo-content, a fragmentation of a unified subject into separate skills. The pressures are insisted on here because it looks as if in both countries they have till recently warped a good deal of current thinking about English; and our notions of knowledge and proficiency can too readily be affected by prejudice and preconceptions.

We must discard examination-bound notions of English and consider the relationship of the child and his own language. Frank Whitehead

starts his recent book on the teaching of English by stressing the need to focus

> the way in which a child's acquisition of his native tongue is inseparably intertwined with his developing consciousness of the world in which he is growing up, with his control of his inner phantasies and the feelings they give rise to, and with his possession of the values by which he will live his life in the civilisation he forms a part of.

This truth is most evident in the teaching that goes on in the best primary schools. English is not separately taught as a subject; it is an activity which pervades the lives of children in and out of school; it is inseparable from their own experiences and social relationships. It is integral with the child's whole personality. He cannot think or feel without his language.

And he has learned a great deal of this language (including more grammar than he will ever be taught in school) before he enters a classroom. He may for ever be happily ignorant of Past Participles, but he will automatically call out at the age of five or so, "Mind Daddy--you'll get runovered." This illustrates the points that the child acquires his language because he needs it imperatively, and he learns it by hearing other people talk. It is a part of him; his language develops, not as an acquisition, but as part of his growth. "Our mother-tongue is something that is built into us at a very deep level of the whole personality."

So that in learning language the child is not just acquiring an instrument; he is coming to terms with his environment, generating new thoughts and feelings, coping with experience. This aspect of English

is most clearly seen before school days, when it is so much a part of the development of each child, but it persists throughout all stages of education and has plain implications for deciding the nature of English as a subject, and for the teacher's theory and practice. Unlike some subjects, it cannot be compartmented and limited to the teaching of skills, the acquisition of knowledge and technique. The teacher's part is thus not limited but extended, for he is seen to be engaged on a task of great importance--that "of increasing command of language for personal development and intellectual growth" (Schools Council Working Paper No. 3).

This task is, however, carried on under conditions very different from those that apply to other subjects. The child enters school knowing a great deal of English; he will continue to learn more, whatever the school does, from other people, and he will spend far more time on it out of school. Moreover, there are no facts, no subject matter, and virtually no rules. Pupils' opinions can count in a way that would not do in a science or language. Such "rules" as there are can be properly learned only when the child is ready for them; and his progress in English is so complicated a matter, so much more than the inculcation of skills, that "the benefits conferred by our lessons in composition may well appear somewhat tenuous" (The Disappearing Dais). The authors of Freedom and Discipline in English develop further the disparity between English and other disciplines:

> The study of English . . . is . . . a matter of constant renewal, constant rediscovery, constant restoration . . . .

> The humanities . . . suffer from having their essence diluted or obscured by what appears to be new . . . because the humanities, the study of one's native language and literature among them, are so thoroughly implicated in everyday human activity, they are highly susceptible to immediate and ephemeral influences . . . Macbeth vies with the writing of thank-you notes for time in the curriculum.

The conception of English as something socially learned and at the same time of central importance to the development of the individual has obvious implications for the teacher. He will hope to develop in his pupils good speaking, good writing, good listening, and good reading; he will try "to ensure that all children gain the widest possible acquaintance with forms of experience in language which are of finer quality than those to which they are exposed in the home and the street." But the means of achieving these goals will mean less teaching of the traditionally accepted kind and a different approach in the teaching which survives the spring-cleaning that is needed. (The writer of this note has just conducted a full-time course for experienced teachers of other subjects who wish to change over to the teaching of English. The great advantage they enjoyed--and their director of studies enjoyed it too--was precisely that they had not taken a university course in English; they were "uncorrupted by literary prejudice.") At the primary stage there may be no class teaching of English at all; throughout there will be a minimum of the prescriptive, didactic element--the title itself (The Disappearing Dais) of Frank Whitehead's new book points to the new direction.

The requirement that he should not over-teach does not mean that there is less for the teacher to do or that his work will be easier. On the contrary. Much over-teaching at present is the result of ignorance, of insecurity, of conscientious incompetence-witness the attachment of some teachers to grammar (whether old or new is immaterial), which gives them something solid, though educationally irrelevant, to inculcate and provides rails that save the trouble of thinking. What the teacher must do is to co-operate with the child's growth by providing a climate for maturation such as other subjects, with their weight of content, cannot afford. At the primary stage he will seek to do this by making the classroom surroundings right and by putting experiences in their way. "We must continually aim at giving the children experiences through which they will develop . . . .We must think less in terms of the subjects a child must learn and more in terms of experiences they can enjoy and gain interest from" (A Yorkshire teacher, quoted in The Excitement of Writing). He will also utilise the out-of-school environment: "In our school, the environment--home, classroom, school and the outdoors--is the hub and basis of all our work" (Teacher in an infants' school). Finally, he will daily enrich the environment by exposing his pupils to literature.

This last-named essential is stressed by many writers and by practising teachers. (All quotations from teachers are taken from The Excitement of Writing, unless shown otherwise.) In a primary school "the children hear a story or poetry daily, so that their

language experience is a rich one," and in a secondary school the pupils "must constantly be stimulated with varied examples of literature chosen by the teacher." The emphasis is a healthy one, because the experience of life that literature provides enables a child to digest new thoughts, take in new feelings, and adopt new attitudes. For "poetic, metaphoric, intuitive understanding is a form of knowledge although it cannot be objectively measured . . . its validity depends on the imaginative power of the author ('imagination' includes penetration, complexity, honesty) and on our capacity as readers to test it against our own sense of experience." (Richard Hoggart, "Literature and Society" in The American Scholar, Spring 1966).

The rest of this paper will briefly consider English in each of its three aspects, speaking, writing, and reading. Oral work for schools has had lip service paid to it for many years, but in fact it has been pushed out of the English curriculum by the backwash of written examinations; there has been no oral testing, therefore no speech practice in the classroom. Since the publication of the "Newsom" Report (Half Our Future) serious attention has been devoted to speech on a wider scale, and works like Andrew Wilkinson's Spoken English have made out the case for it, explored the methods, and established some of the relevant criteria. Dr. Wilkinson sets out the argument:

> The development of the personality is inextricably bound up with the development of language . . . . On the one hand the process of growth through education and experience causes him to reach out for new language . . . . On the other hand this language contains new thoughts and shades of thought, new feeling and shades of feeling, which help

> to determine such growth. His ability to direct rather than be directed by experience, his ability to establish human relationships, are intimately related to his capacity for language; the frustrations of the inarticulate go deep. And it must be borne in mind that "language" in this context is overwhelmingly the spoken language . . . . Without oracy human [illegible]ent is impossible; speech and personality are one.

On a lower plane, many teachers have believed that clear, fluent, idiomatic speech is the best approach to an adequate style of writing and have felt that they must make sure of their pupils' ability to meet the need for good speech in later life "when a consecutive ordered statement is called for." They have found that "the basic teaching device in the training of oracy is the creation of stimulating speech situations," which fall under four headings: Spontaneous Speech, Interpretation, Listening, and Focal Points. The first includes discussion, for which the class is divided into groups, with a particular end in view; composition, in the form of short prepared talks which serve to increase the young speaker's confidence; panels, i.e., modelled on press conferences, inquiries, brain trusts and patterns provided by radio and television; role-playing, in what is variously called psychodrama, creative dramatics, or free drama; and "brief encounters," instant speech situations requiring an immediate impromptu answer to a question of instruction. Under Interpretation come reading aloud in various forms, poetry, and drama. Listening is an activity that needs instruction in technique and specific practice--"the technique of listening is to be sharpened on the spoken language itself in all its manifestations," so that children become aware not only of

what is said, but how it is said. Under "Focal Points" Dr. Wilkinson places radio programmes, festivals, reading, and debating competitions.

Again according to Dr. Wilkinson, the criteria of good speech will fall under such headings as : Voice (range, tone, accent); Content (ideas, appropriateness of vocabulary and phrase); Delivery (clarity, projection, and volume); Fluency (coherence and sensitivity); Reciprocity (relationship with the listener--contact, flexibility, style); and Interpretation (appreciation of mood, content, and intention of material read aloud). With some aspects of English there would be risks in indicating standards of proficiency and suggesting methods of attaining them. The attempt could lead to new and educationally poor text-books--there are abundant examples in the field of written English; it would eventually have repercussions on examinations and hence almost certainly deplorable results in the schools. But with oral work the risk is less. There is a likelihood that recommendations would strengthen the position of speaking in schools, lead to desirable practices, and have some influence in producing intelligent, vital, and intelligible speech.

In both the States and England there has been dissatisfaction with the standard of written English attained by those who leave school. It need hardly be documented. The English Language Paper taken at about sixteen by about 25 percent of school leavers in England stands as a monumental failure to achieve any improvement. Despite this, the British universities have introduced a use of English paper to test and raise the standard of English writing in university entrants. So far

as the aims at school level are concerned, there will be no disagreement with the statement of the Association of Assistant Masters in their The Teaching of English:

> Our main aim should not be to produce potential Elias but so to equip our pupils that they can express themselves clearly, coherently, and effectively; that they can use their language competently for the many practical tasks that await them; and--more ambitiously--that they have some awareness of the resources of the English tongue. . . . As the pupil grows older, we can more clearly demonstrate the various functions and potentialities of language. He will have practice in emotive writing, and in writing where "tone" is important.

However, in our expectations about the writing of our pupils we must go further. The note struck by Freedom and Discipline in English ("To learn to write well one must care-care for the truth, care for the audience, care for one's own integrity") is echoed by many practising teachers in England. J. H. Walsh insists: "Shrewdness of observation--fidelity to experience--the sort of truthfulness which is born out of interest and personal involvement. . . these things matter most, and are the first things for us to look for" (Teaching English, p.40). And "freshness, vitality, authenticity and unity of tone, individual choice of words and phrase" are the desiderata of a Yorkshire teacher.

For many years the chief instrument in teaching children to write in both countries was the text-book: in secondary schools, a five-volume course in grammar and composition. So far as England is concerned, faith in this means to good writing is dead. Again and again the many teachers, especially from primary schools, who contribute to The Excitement of Writing affirm the futility of certain text-books:

"We learn to write by writing. We do not learn to write by filling in blanks or by writing English exercises." This, like many of the teacher-quotations here, comes from a primary school in an unpromising industrial area. It is in the primary schools that some of the most interesting methods and the most distinguished writing are found. Quite clearly, the work done at this level has very positive implications for the secondary stage. They should be explored without delay. Frank Whitehead points the way:

> The first task is to ensure that all our pupils have plentiful experience of using the medium of writing for purposes with which they fully identify themselves; and the teacher's main role is to establish the conditions under which this regular practice will be most fully conducive to improvement.

Many of the teachers who contributed to The Excitement of Writing enlarge on just this point--establishing the conditions that make for good writing.

They find, for example, that most of those who write well start by writing poetry or expressive prose--"personal" writing, that is, about the individual's own impressions and experiences--and they produce evidence which deserves to be pondered. The point made in Freedom and Discipline in English (p. 85), that it is the teacher's sympathy with anyone struggling to order his experience that makes him able to help students write better, emerges also from the experience of good teachers in England--such as Mr. J. H. Walsh (p. 42, Teaching English), Frank Whitehead (op. cit., pp. 180,181--"Children will need to meet the challenge of an audience") and the Yorkshire teachers quoted in The Excitement of Writing (cf. pp. 19, 39, 44, 162). They are agreed too

that encouragement is vital, while "destructive criticism rarely does any good, and it may paralyse completely . . ." The value of much personal writing for the child is that it enables him to get "to closer grips with the realities of living" (J. H. Walsh) and through making discoveries about himself and about people in general to "make small steps towards maturity."

Lastly, it is a general experience among teachers of English in England that literature, though studied for its own sake, is the main road to good writing. Their testimony is unanimous that through his reading the child learns new sentence patterns, extends his vocabulary, acquires all the grammar he needs, and masters the mechanics (punctuation, use of capitals) of the language. This is borne out by Professor Ford's observation of English in technical colleges and by Mr. Heath's experiment at Birmingham in "Library-centred English," though, as Professor Kitzhaber reminds us, there is "no quick and painless way to develop a well-stocked mind, a disciplined intelligence, and a discriminating taste in language and its use," the study of literature can play a chief part in the attaining of them by the route he envisages: "They are to a considerable extent the result of increasing maturity and of the total educational process acting on an intelligent mind" (Cf. Criteria for Success in English, p. 9; The Excitement of Writing, passim).

This brings us to literature, literature for its own sake, "not (as) . . . a document in the history of language, literature or society. It is not simply a report on, or homily on, life. As a work of art, it is a special kind of experience. It is a mode of living. Our primary purpose is to add this kind of experience to the other kinds of desirable experience that life offers" (Louise M. Rosenblatt). In this view, literature is the culminating aspect of English in schools; "All children, whatever their ultimate role in life is to be, need experience of literature . . . if their personalities are to expand and flower into a capacity for fulness of living" (The Disappearing Dais).

There are at present considerable differences about the knowledge of literature to be expected from students. On the one hand there are those who favour the study of genre, literary forms, chronological arrangement. Others believe that information about literature is not important enough for any time to be given to it, that chronology is an irrelevant survival of an outworn approach, and that a concern with poetic technique impedes a sensitive response. Dr. Squire's view (English Journal, March 1966, p. 187)--"Our literature programs tend to place far too little attention to the close reading of literary texts, far too much on superficial coverage and talking about texts"--is closely paralleled by a representative English statement:

> To enjoy a poem that mentions "fruit of Jaffa" it is necessary to know that Jaffa grows oranges; it is irrelevant to be told of Richard I or the politics of Israel . . .

> school texts . . . become the refuse-tips of scholarship, where literature is buried beneath a slag-heap of useless knowledge about variant readings, classical allusions and the rest. Talk about an author's life or his social background may be helpful, but we should not make a habit of it. (The Teaching of English)

Whether or not courses based on chronology or technique are survivals from an age when all education was academic and are kept there by an interest in "scholarship" rather than in education we cannot be sure, but we can be certain that they sometimes lead to bad choices and unprofitable treatment. Principles of selection should be thought out. What we choose for children should be enjoyable and interesting to them; we badly need some more studies of children's preferences and the bringing up-to-date of such books as A. J. Jenkinson's What Do Girls and Boys Read? (Until then there are some very satisfactory pages - pp. 42 ff.--in The Disappearing Dais.) Children seek among other things enlargement of experience and compensation for the inadequacies and troubles of their own lives. We shall therefore look for books that will extend the capacity for experience, "an enlargement and refinement of that imaginative sympathy through which we gain an increased grasp of the realities of human living and a deeper insight into the way in which human beings . . . think and feel and believe and affect one another" (The Disappearing Dais). If we do think out such principles, some of the current book lists and recommendations will have to be severely weeded. Why do we go on including Paradise Lost, She Stoops to Conquer, School for Scandal, Silas Marner, Lord of the Flies? Merely because they have always been there or because other

people list them. It is suggested that, for different reasons, all these books are unsuited to the age-groups for which they are commonly prescribed. (Cf. Criteria of Success in English, p. 20; The Disappearing Dais, Ch. 2). Freedom and Discipline in English considered the possibility of a canon of literary works but preferred the consensus of opinion to be found in good English departments--a view which would be widely accepted in England, where the catering for what unthinking teachers believe to be children's tastes has allowed the introduction of a great deal of rubbish. The recommendation (Dr. James Squire, "A School for All Seasons," The English Journal, March 1966) of the National Study of High School English is extremely important: "500 appropriate titles for student reading in every classroom--a standard which our observation suggests may well lead to an average expectation that young people read 20 or 25 books a semester rather than the more usual, paltry four or five." Greater library use and more classroom reading are also indicated.

Students should leave school with skill in reading that will enable them to understand more than the mere sense (Cf. I.A. Richards, Practical Criticism) of a piece of writing. We shall expect them to distinguish between the referential and emotive use of words, but without these technical terms. "The mood, feelings and emotions expressed or implied, the writer's and speaker's general intentions, and their sometimes changing attitudes to their readers or audience are all indicated through language" (Criteria for Success in English, p. 12).

They should be able to approach different kinds of writing, including poetry, in the appropriate way. "Students who have been taught well know what to look for in their reading of literature" (The Teaching of Literature, p. 6).

Freedom and Discipline in English (p. 75) goes further and suggests that the student's approach should be critical and enable him to assess the quality of his reading. "How good is it? Even with his relatively limited background, the student can make a start toward answering this question. . . . He will not . . . establish a ladder of excellence beyond dispute, but he will learn to discriminate on reliable grounds, and he will learn to respect the act of discrimination." Frank Whitehead in his chapter on "Reading and Literature" enlarges on the need for training a critical attitude and considers the dangers and possibilities. He regrets that in England most students leave school before they are mature enough to profit from the kind of work he desiderates. However, he concludes--and his view is shared by very many teachers and even by examining boards--that some elementary critical work can be attempted with many students of about fifteen onwards on such material as advertisements and the press (cf. The Teaching of English, pp. 80-82). The working party may wish to consider how far any student can be considered proficient in English if he is readily gulled by advertisers' prose and consumes uncritically all that is pressed on him by the mass media.

The teacher's greatest hope is to foster a habit of reading that will last a life-time. If the will to read cannot be planted and nourished, the scope of English teaching is circumscribed. This applies to the whole of English; the student's attitude must be right before any useful knowledge can be imparted or proficiency attained.

It is hoped that the working party will have at its disposal much of the kind of material of which samples are given in Appendices B and C. We should have liked to include also a wide range of examples of student writing.

The writer apologises for the British bias of the note. Owing to what turned out to be a very full-time post for the first three months of the year there was little time for reading. But our human material and our problems are not widely different.

APPENDIX A

Topics for Consideration

The working party will have its own ideas, but the list below may fill a few gaps. Actual examples of syllabuses, schemes of work, children's writing, tapes of children's speech, stock school classics, and lists of books recommended for school reading may be regarded as essential to lend concreteness and provide common ground for discussion.

I. General

1. What attitudes and habits are preliminary to knowledge and proficiency? And how are they fostered?
2. A study of school and examination syllabuses from America and England.
3. What are the implications for knowledge and proficiency of "that unified conception of English" desiderated by Frank Whitehead (p. 238)?

II. Writing

4. A study of actual examples of children's writing at various ages and from various backgrounds would be helpful in order to reach an accepted standard. Frank Whitehead's book contains an excellent range of examples, and the comment goes deeper than any we have seen. Other good collections are the I.A.T.E.

Discussing Compositions (which is cheap enough for every member to have a copy), The Excitement of Writing, and Young Writers, Young Readers.

5. What modes and quantity of writing can be expected of various age-groups?
6. What constitutes good writing at various ages?
7. "The ability to use words well is an indivisible achievement which . . . will be used effectively in whatever kind of writing the child does." (A. B. Clegg)
8. How far does "correctness" matter?
9. It is fashionable to be entirely permissive in matters of usage. Is this desirable? Language has its own life . . . but can we not control it in some measure? Are we (for example) to accept as inevitable the loss of distinctions such as uninterested, disinterested, imply, infer?
10. How are our ideas about proficiency in writing affected by the hypothesis that creative writing is the best way to good writing of all kinds?
11. Are there any methods of testing without undesirable feedback?

III. Reading

12. Again, the study of concrete examples (book lists, tests set, Exercise Exchange, M. Marland's sheets on advertising)

may help to decide what quantity and type of reading, and what attainment in reading ("reading for meaning," assessment) should be expected at various ages.

13. What is "proficiency" in reading? Can it exclude poetry? Can it be said to have been attained by anyone who habitually prefers Ian Fleming to Mark Twain?
14. Are there any books which everyone should be expected to have read by various ages?
15. When should we require habitually critical reading?
16. What principles should decide the choice of reading matter of which we expect students to have some knowledge?
17. What do we require in the way of proficiency when it comes to reading poetry? (Must we impose Milton, Spenser? Are they not dead for most of us?)
18. Should a knowledge of the arrangement, working, and facilities of a good library be expected from all who leave school?
19. Are there any fully satisfactory methods of testing reading ability, once this has been defined for various ages?
20. What knowledge, if any, of literary terms are we to expect, and for what purpose?
21. Knowledge of the "classics" of English?
22. Literature as the core of all work in English and the implications.
23. What kind and quantity of reading shall we expect of various tracks at various ages?

LINGUISTICS

It is not yet possible to say what knowledge of linguistics should be expected of students, for the benefits of the science to the teaching of English are not clear. Here it is for teachers of English to decide what kind of linguistics is useful to them, and when, and not for the linguists themselves. Too often it has been the other way round; some linguists have empire-builded in education, introducing into the schools material that is educationally irrelevant or premature. The old assumption that foisted the old grammar upon us--"What can be learned must be taught--remains unchallenged, despite all the new knowledge of how children learn. J. S. Bruner's observation, "While young children are able to use the structural rules of English, they are certainly not able to say what the rules are" (The Process of Education), is paralleled by D.R. Barnes (N.A.T.E. Bulletin No. 1):

> Linguistic study seeks to make conscious and general that which is known in a way unconscious and particular. Clearly some such self-awareness is valuable for adults. But how far need this be systematized? . . . To impose upon most pupils an inclusive system of linguistic description would require repetitions quite as laboriously deadly as traditional grammar.

APPENDIX B

Some Books Suitable for Use as Class-Readers
(from The Disappearing Dais)

Secondary Modern Streams	Grammar Streams
First Year	
Jim Davis (Masefield)	Martin Hyde (Masefield)
The Prince and the Pauper (Twain)	Treasure Island (Stevenson)
Treasure Island (Stevenson)	The Boy Who Was Afraid (Sperry)
The Adventures of Tom Sawyer (Twain)	A Christmas Carol (Dickens)
	A Country Child (Uttley)
	The Rose and the Ring (Thackeray)
	The Adventures of Tom Sawyer (Twain)
Second Year	
The Boy Who Was Afraid (Sperry)	Moonfleet (Falkner)
Martin Hyde (Masefield)	White Fang (London)
A Christmas Carol (Dickens)	The Call of the Wild (London)
The Splendid Journal (Morrow)	The Light in the Forest (Richter)
The First Men in the Moon (Wells)	
Third Year	
The Call of the Wild (London)	Short Stories (Wells)
White Fang (London)	The Pearl (Steinbeck)

King Solomon's Mines (Haggard)

Prester John (Buchan)

The Prisoner of Zenda (Hope)

The Invisible Man (Wells)

Moonfleet (Falkner)

The Silver Sword (Serraillier)

The Light in the Forest (Richter)

Six Stories (Twain)

Off-Beat (ed. Whitehead)

The Day of the Triffids (Wyndham)

The Chrysalids (Wyndham)

Moby Dick (Melville)

Fourth Year

The Pearl (Steinbeck)

Three Men in a Boat (Jerome)

Kon-Tiki (Heyerdahl)

A Pattern of Islands (Grimble)

Six Stories (Twain)

Off-Beat (ed. Whitehead)

The Day of the Triffids (Wyndham)

The Red Pony (Steinbeck)

The Canyon (Schaefer)

The Chrysalids (Wyndham)

People and Diamonds (Holbrook)

The Red Pony (Steinbeck)

Life on the Mississippi (Twain)

Honey in the Horn (Davis)

Jane Eyre (Brontë)

Youth and Gaspar Ruiz (Conrad)

Typhoon (Conrad)

A Tale of Two Cities (Dickens)

Huckleberry Finn (Twain)

People and Diamonds (Holbrook)

The Getting of Wisdom (Richardson)

Twentieth Century Short Stories (ed. Barnes and Egford)

Far from the Madding Crowd (Hardy)

Lark Rise (Thompson)

APPENDIX C

The C.S.E. Leaver and Standards

(The Certificate of Education is awarded on examination to very large numbers of students at the age of sixteen.)

"The C.S.E. leaver ought to take with him from school a wide range of linguistic skills, a sensitivity to language in a variety of forms, a keen awareness of the power of language to enhance man's view of himself when used with clarity and concern, or to depreciate personal value when debased or perverted.

"Most of his language experience will be in the oral form. He will be able to converse with clarity and conviction both within the familiar group and with the outsider. He will have learnt that the value of conversation lies in the sharing of experience it involves. Thus he will know how to listen intelligently and 'openly.' He will write with a high but not perfect degree of technical accuracy (errors which seriously impede communication are not acceptable) in a variety of idioms: personally or imaginatively, narratively and in more formal 'public' terms. He will have read widely especially in the field of the modern novel. The private-reading habit will be firmly established. He will approach the newspaper and the advertisement critically, and will have cultivated some discrimination in the mass audio-visual sphere.

He will be able to account for his preferences. In drama he will have found a mode of self-expression and will have learnt the part played by theatre in our lives. He will have examined the apprehensions of the poet, not analytically, rather in the spirit of discovery. He will have tried himself to 'capture' experience in poetic terms. He will know his way around a library. In short the sixteen year-old C.S.E. leaver will have cultivated an extending awareness of the relevance of language in all its forms. If we have succeeded in our teaching the developing awareness we have encouraged in the school will survive and flourish in adult life itself. We shall have helped our pupils to make sense of themselves and of their experience of life."

(John Hipkin, a teacher of English in a secondary modern (i.e. non-selective)school)

SOURCES

American Studies Association, etc.	The Basic Issues in the Teaching of English (esp. pp. 5-7, 9, 10, 13, 15, 16)	N.C.T.E.
J. S. Bruner	The Process of Education	Harvard University Press
Cambridge Institute of Education	English in the Certification of Secondary Education	Cambridge University Press
A. B. Clegg	The Excitement of Writing	Chatto
Commission on English	Freedom and Discipline in English	College Entrance Examination Board
J. W. P. Creber	Sense and Sensitivity	University of London Press
Boris Ford ed.	Liberal Education in a Technical Age	Max Parrish
W. G. Heath	"Library-Centred English" in Educational Review, Vol. 14, No. 2.	Oliver and Boyd
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Incorporated Association of Assistant Masters	The Teaching of English	Cambridge University Press
Brian Jackson ed.	English versus Examinations	Chatto
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London Association for the Teaching of English	Assessing Compositions	Blackie
Michael Marland	Sheets on "Advertising"	Chatto
Joseph Mersand	Attitudes towards English Teaching	Chilton Company

National Association for the Teaching of English	Criteria of Success in English	N.A.T.E.
National Council of Teachers of English	The Teaching of Literature	Council-Grams, Vol. XXVII, No. 3.
Schools Council	Working Paper No. 3	
Secondary School Examination Council	The Examining of English Language	H. M. Stationery Office
James R. Squire	"National Study of High School English Programs"	English Journal, March 1966.
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J. H. Walsh	Teaching English	Heinemann
Frank Whitehead	The Disappearing Dais	Chatto
Andrew Wilkinson	Spoken English	University of Birmingham

Working Party Paper IV

The Teaching of English and the general development of children

(1) Educating an individual child is an attempt to ensure at any point in time the resolution of several tensions-for instance trust and mistrust, intimacy and autonomy, adventure and security, industry and withdrawal--which emerge in the child's life in an orderly sequence. The implication for the teacher of English is the need at any one time to adjust the emphasis between different and competing demands. The adjustment of emphasis between items in the curriculum at different stages is complementary to the need to relate these stages to each other in continuity.

(2) Our system of education must be geared to the demands of an increasingly heterogeneous society. We are faced with competing values among and within individual children. These loyalties affect their speech and their attitudes towards speech, their attitude to reading as a skill and to literature. It is not enough to say that we start with the child and that we respect what he brings with him. What the child brings with him, no matter how rich it may be, is limited. The linguistic environment in which he has been reared may induce a dialect approximating to standard English, or it may contain very great differences. In the first instance, the school has merely to build on the oral proficiency the child has already acquired; in the second, the school will assume the responsibility of attempting to provide him with a command of the standard language. If the deviation from the standard is slight, it is likely that Standard English will serve as a total or near-total replacement of the child's native speech. If the deviation is considerable, he will emerge from his schooling as a bi- or multi-dialectal speaker. Similarly the child should be given every

opportunity of exploring very different kinds of literature and aesthetic experiences, and not be restricted to an interest determined by his possibly restricted social and cultural environment.

(3) Though education is an individual and personal process it is not simply subjective, but proceeds in certain observable and objective ways. His development conforms in broad terms to the sequence of development of most children brought up in the same culture. This implies the desirability of a sequence programme in English which takes into account and prepares for stages in that development, whether affective or cognitive. If English does not make its peculiar contribution no other subject can substitute for it. Other subjects like history and science contribute as much and possibly more to extending the child's use of language, flexibility of syntax, and variety and richness of vocabulary; no child comes to an understanding of language so easily and well as in the English class. This suggests the need for some study of language itself. Furthermore these other subjects do not normally provide the opportunity for developing a sensitivity to language as the study of literature does. For these reasons, instruction in language and literature should be combined, with different proportions of emphasis at different stages in the teaching of English.

(4) The uniqueness which characterizes each child expresses itself in differences in ability to cope with, aptitude for, and attitude towards aspects of the English programme. Courses should be differentiated, and not simply according to the speed at which they are taken, but according to their content and the emphasis to be given to the various components of a largely general English curriculum. It would be unrealistic, however, to expect that we have enough teachers to staff such a differentiated programme

ideally, or that the majority of those we do have possess the intellectual and professional capacity to do the job as well as it needs doing. It is, in practical terms, better that they should give instruction in homogeneous groups and classes. We are left with the need to indicate what aspects of English are most appropriate for different kinds of groupings, and what could best be taken in heterogeneous classes.

(5) Education needs to take into account the affective and cognitive development of children equally. A child needs to be induced to want to judge not simply the interest of a point of view or opinion but whether in fact it is reasonably likely to be true, and to judge the relevance of an experience for the task of daily living. And he must not only want to exercise these faculties but have been trained in the exercise of them. This suggests the need to regard English as providing the opportunity for a challenging intellectual experience, in addition to whatever else it provides.

(6) The child's development is a process of learning within a particular culture. Granted that the first thing we need to ensure is the release of a child's potentialities and powers, there are two points to make:

a) we need a principle for selecting such materials as provide the occasion for the creative act. The comics and T.V. can promote freedom of response as well as good literature. The difference does not lie so much in their aptitude to do this work as in the direction which they incline the released powers to take, once they are released. The complex of traditions we call our heritage inevitably exerts an educative influence on the child's development. So does contemporary literature: it makes its appropriate contribution when it is seen as the most recent manifestation of our rich history

and as providing the opportunity to question the traditional values of our society.

b) furthermore, the release of powers, the opportunity for creative expression, is only the beginning of the story. Clearly we must recognize the importance of the instinct of origination, but an education based mainly on the training of that instinct is not enough. Language conveys to the child an already prepared system of values and ideas which form his culture. The child's possession of language enables him to discover a vast world of thought external to himself which will instruct him and which will enable him to operate from a secure anchorage, necessary to personal development.

(7) The culture which is necessary for growth is a historical continuum. Each new generation is not a new people: we are what we are because we are able to share in a past, in a common heritage, not simply because of our ability to communicate in the present or share the excitement of innovation. For this reason, though other parts of the curriculum, too, help to develop some sense of history, English cannot ignore the importance of the historical imagination, and it should feed it in terms of an understanding of not only the works of literature in their historical context, but also of the development of the language itself. A child should be aware of how his language came to be what it is; and though we would not want to encourage the teaching of the history of literature very early or base the literature course on it, we should present any work in its historical context.

(8) To a considerable extent education serves a social purpose. Because we face a divided society we need a source of unity to give us the chance of a shared experience. The teaching of children in all kinds of

schools should contribute to this. English is the channel of formative culture: no form of knowledge can take precedence over a knowledge of English, and no form of literature can take precedence over literature in English. The English programme should provide a child with the verbal tools and cultural preparation to enable him to play his part at whatever level in such a unified or coherent society.

(9) Conclusion

The arguments so far advanced would imply first that English has a content which is linguistic and literary. This linguistic and literary content has historical and contemporary dimensions. For instance so far as language is concerned we need to know something about the language we speak at present and about how it came to have its present form. So far as literature is concerned there is a case to be made for providing knowledge about literature at present and again about how it came to be what it is.

English also has a dimension which we can call proficiency--it offers a body of skills to be acquired. It has also a dimension we can call personal development, which is not identical with knowledge or proficiency but to which both of them contribute. Therefore the child needs not only to be exposed to good influences or located within a favourable environment--he needs some instruction. It goes without saying that the teaching should be humane and given with the utmost discretion.

The teacher's role in all this is multiform. He is a trained observer, a judicious intervener, a humane teacher and an evaluator. Furthermore he can help produce a delicate equilibrium of the many opposing forces in the life of a child, an equilibrium which is maintained by the judicious adjustment of the importance to be attached to the several components of

the English course at any one time and the several aims which have to be proposed. Above all, however, he is two things--he is himself unique as the child he teaches is unique; but he is also a representative who helps to transmit a heritage and tradition and helps children respond to it in their own fashion, thereby enriching it. And he helps to safeguard it.

The aims set out in the second paper give greater specificity in terms of knowledge and proficiency to the principles discussed here.

The Aims of Teaching English

The primary aim is to teach the student to read, write, speak, and listen well. There is naturally disagreement over the best means to this end, and in particular over how much knowledge of literature and language is essential to proficiency, but the curriculum to the end of secondary school should at least include the following broad objectives:

Literature. Here the primary aim is not only ability but a lasting desire to read books. For the sake of both proficiency and pleasure the student should be able to understand implied as well as surface meanings, to make critical judgments as a basis for choice in his own reading, to recognize the values presented in literature, and to relate them to his own attitudes and values. He should be familiar with the "reservoir" literature that forms a common background for our culture (classical mythology, European folk and fairy tales, Arthurian legends, the Bible, etc.) with a range of selections from English and American literature, and with some from other literatures in good translation. So far as possible he should have some "time sense"--not a detailed, lifeless knowledge of names and dates, but an imaginative sense of the past. Today he should also be acquainted more discriminately with media of expression other than the book--moving pictures, radio, television--and have some initial awareness and enjoyment of them as sources of aesthetic experience. Disagreement arises over how much knowledge he should have of literary forms and initial vocabulary, but at least he should have some experience with the diverse forms and with talk about them.

Composition and Speech. The primary objective is an ability to write and speak clearly, directly, and effectively, with an awareness of and respect

for the reader or listener. The student should also be able to express himself imaginatively so as to heighten his powers of creativity and to sharpen and extend his awareness of life. He should have a working knowledge of rhetorical techniques, whether or not in terms of principle, for the sake of ease and effectiveness, and a similar working knowledge of the basic principles of systematic thinking for the sake of consistency in his own writing and speaking and of critical judgment of the writing and speaking of others. He should recognize that the use of language, like any other social act, entails an ethical obligation to speak and write responsibly. (As a reader and listener he may then be more aware of the common disrespect for this obligation in an age of high-powered advertising, publicity, and propaganda.)

Language. Disagreement appears to be sharpest over how much knowledge of language is necessary for proficiency in the use of the language. But there remains a broad agreement on some basic objectives. The student should acquire some understanding of the nature of denotations and connotations of words. In view of the popular acceptance of the importance of learning to speak and write "good English," he should be made aware of the fluidity of language, variations in English, the existence of dialects, differences in standards, and the basis for standards. The fundamental importance of language in man's realizing his humanity and carrying on all his distinctive activities makes it desirable that the student have some awareness of this importance, and so far as possible some knowledge of the nature, structure, and history of English. The study of language--as of literature--need not be confined to its practical uses, but may be justified simply as a humanistic study, valuable in itself. Those who agree but object that priorities in

the classroom makes it impossible to devote time to this study may nevertheless admit that teachers inevitably talk a good deal about language anyway, and regret that by common consent many of them have been wasting much time in unprofitable exercises and the teaching of obsolete grammar resting upon outmoded assumptions about language.

Language and Environment Considered in Relation to Knowledge and Proficiency

The child of five or six entering school generally brings with him a command of the basic patterns of the language and a vocabulary of some three to five thousand words. Both have been shaped by his home environment and that of the neighborhood in which he lives. He responds to the oral language used by others and employs it himself. Generally he knows neither how to read or write.

The linguistic environment in which he has been reared may represent or approximate that of the standard language. It may, on the other hand, reflect a linguistic system other than Standard English. In the first instance the school has merely to build on the oral proficiency the child has already acquired. In the second, an American school at least will assume the responsibility of attempting to provide him with a command of the standard language. If the deviation from the standard is slight, it is likely that Standard English will serve as a total or near-total replacement of the child's native speech. If the deviation is considerable, he will probably emerge from his schooling as a bi- or multi-dialectical speaker. In considering these matters, however, it is important not to confuse the social levels of English under discussion here with the form of transmission (oral or written) or with the styles appropriate to various degrees of formality. All of us write differently from the way in which we speak, and all of us quite properly adjust the style of our discourse to the situation in which it is used. Most Americans do not command more than one dialect, social or regional.

In teaching the child to read and to express himself in writing, the school is giving him a command of the writing system of a language in which

he already has considerable oral proficiency. It is likely that for about three years his command of this system, productively and even receptively, will lag behind his command of the language itself. From about the fourth year of school the child's ability to read can serve as a tool for the enlargement of his linguistic experience. It becomes the responsibility of the school to make certain that reading is employed in this manner.

As a school subject, language is unique in that the amount of time that can be devoted to it in the classroom amounts to but a small fraction of the child's total use of the medium. He utters and responds to language over a twelve to fourteen hour period daily. Thus, when there is any considerable gap between the language of the schoolroom and the rest of the child's linguistic environment, the results of school instruction are necessarily limited. This demands an efficiently designed program and effective teaching procedures which will direct and reinforce the normal processes of language development. Research on this point is sorely needed.

If knowledge is interpreted as knowledge <u>about</u> the language and proficiency as constituting skill in its use and interpretation, I would contend that the latter is our primary consideration. The continued functioning of our society in the face of increasing complexity and the preservation of the humanities in it demand a highly literate and articulate public on a wider scale than we have yet achieved. This is the immediate social necessity which the educational system serves.

If it can be demonstrated that knowledge of the structure and functioning of language results in a more proficient use of it, there can be no question about the value of such knowledge. Up to the present such a conclusion, irrespective of the mode of linguistic analysis employed, rests upon faith

rather than upon the irrefutable evidence of controlled experimentation. It does seem, however, that a case for knowledge about language might be made on other grounds. We generally accept, as an educational aim, the value of knowing how men live together in society and the mechanisms through which this is achieved. Language is possibly the most important of these, and to the degree that a knowledge of its structure and function contributes to this end, there would seem to be a place for it in our educational program.

Literature and Values

In all writing, ranging from stock market reporting to political journalism, values are implicit; and English teachers will want to assist students in the discovery of values becomes complex and difficult and perhaps deserves special attention.

In every work of literature there is a perspective on the world and on life. In this perspective there is implicit or explicit what is called variously a moral dimension, a system of values, a vision of the nature of things, a truth. Although this element appears frequently to be the most exciting aspect of a work of literature, it is never sufficient in itself to constitute the success of a work: there must also be (among much else) artistry, craftsmanship, the structural or shaping imagination, a sense of things, of people, of life.

The experiencing of a work of literature means in some sense an absorption into the drama of the work; this imaginative experience parallels in its elements the nature of a real experience. Thus, as real experience frequently calls into play moral judgment, so the imaginative experiencing of a work of literature frequently calls into being the moral imagination.

In the teaching of literature, as it involves the moral imagination, there are two ways to achieve a major failure: first, to treat the moral dimension as though it were the sole end of literature, to extract it, to encapsulate it, to divorce it from its material or dramatic embodiment and offer it to students as abstract truth; or, second, to avoid the difficulties and dangers of discussing the moral dimension by ignoring and concentrating on formal, aesthetic, structural or other elements. Both of these methods are reductive and lead to apathy and imaginative sterility in the English classroom.

Nor can the teacher avoid these failures by selecting solely works of literature to teach that do not disturb, that are not "subversive" or upsetting--works that appear, in short, to be ethically or morally neutral. The curriculum should be open to books of a great variety of values and visions, including those that rub against the grain of society, that counter prevailing values as they are either preached or practiced.

As the teacher of literature is concerned with developing and expanding the student's total imaginative capacity, so he must be concerned with all aspects of the imagination, including the moral imagination. He should not become didactic and attempt to inculcate beliefs; rather he should question, discuss, and explore with his students. Such exploration will lead more frequently to complexity than to simplicity, to ambiguity than to precision, to paradox than to resolution.

And some powerful, classic literary works will embody sets of beliefs so remote in culture or age that neither the teacher nor the students are likely to find them congenial. It remains the responsibility of the teacher, however, to render such works accessible to the students, perhaps by drawing such distinctions as I. A. Richards' "verifiable belief" and "imaginative assent."

One of the major purposes for offering a wide variety of authors and works in the literary curriculum is to liberate the student from his ethical parochialism and rigidity, to free him from a moral position often platitudinous and frequently unexamined. Literature properly presented should open to the student a variety of possibilities of values and visions, confront him (like life itself) with a multiplicity of ethical systems or moral perspectives. This expansion and deepening of the student's moral awareness constitutes the education of his moral imagination. It is one important (but not the sole) aim of literary study.

School Facilities for the Teaching of English

Physical conditions in schools should help teachers fulfill their professional responsibilities. Just as teachers of art, music, science, geography, and technical subjects need rooms and equipment suitable to their subjects and programmes, so do teachers of English. Merely because teachers of English have somehow survived for centuries teaching in box-like, barren rooms should not strengthen the assumption that they should continue to do so.

The following list stipulates some aspects of the school environment essential to modern teachers of English:

1. School authorities who understand what is involved in the teaching of English, who cooperate with them in developing their programmes, and who provide them with proper facilities;

2. A professional library conveniently located for the teachers of English;

3. Physical conditions in terms of space and moveable furniture so that tables and chairs can be arranged in any way dictated by the particular teaching situation;

4. Adequate facilities for audio-visual aid materials, e.g. power points (electric outlets), film and strip projectors, screens, overhead projectors, sound recording booths, and tape recorders including portable machines for field work;

5. Duplicating equipment;

6. Drama rostra and space for drama work.

In addition English Departments ought to have technical and secretarial help in the use of this equipment in the same way as science departments generally have laboratory assistants.

We must move away from the classroom idea of the teaching of English to a more flexible kind of organization which will enable the Department to become the basic unit, combining teaching methods with work in tutorial groups of a variety of kinds. This can only be achieved in English workshop conditions as described above which will enable us to make the fullest uses of the resources available to us in terms of equipment, staff, and talent.